

instances. A new idea is never absolutely new, but it is the modification of previous ideas which when the time is fulfilled appear as prototypes or prophesies.

P. C.

REMARKS ON "LUTHER ON TRANSLATION."

BY A. KAMPMEIER.

All will admit that Luther by his translation of the Bible has pre-eminently become the creator of the modern German literary language. But we must not forget that his work in this respect was not without predecessors. The Bible of Luther was not the first, as is the general popular idea. Since the invention of printing seventeen German translations of the Bible, in High and Low German, had come forth up to the year 1518, four years before Luther's translation of the New Testament came out. Five German translations had already appeared before 1477, six years before Luther's birth. Luther was only one translator among others, and he surely availed himself of the work of his forerunners and profited by them even if only by their mistakes and defects. From this we may see, that there was no opposition to a German translation of the Bible on principle, as some might think. This is another proof of the gradual evolution of the Reformation of the Mediæval Church. Even in regard to the translation "alone by faith," the great point of contention between Luther's followers and the Roman Church, Luther was not the first. In the so-called Nuremberg Bible, published in the year of Luther's birth, 1483, Gal. ii. 16, which has fully the same meaning as Romans iii. 28, is rendered "alone by faith." Although Luther contends that "alone" was necessary to make good German, he does not use the word in Gal. ii. 16, though this passage has the same meaning. That a dogmatic and polemical bias also led Luther in the translation, I think every unprejudiced mind will concede. Any one who knows how Luther laid stress on "salvation by faith alone," in opposition to his opponents and who knows his polemical attitude will easily admit this. His fighting position towards the Roman Church even led him to take greater liberties in the translation of the Bible, than he conscientiously ought to have done. Luther himself admitted that he translated passages (in the Old Testament especially) purposely in such a way that they could be better used in the fight with the Papists and were also better fitted to be used as texts for sermons. I have this on the authority of Dr. Diestel, whose lectures I attended when a student in Tübingen in 1877. I remember him saying this in a lecture, in which he pointed out the necessity of a better translation of the Bible. Dr. Diestel was a noted exegetist of the Old Testament and was known for his work on "The Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Christian Church." He surely would not have made such a remark without foundation, especially since it was entirely in his branch. The assertion of Dr. Diestel may very well be true, if we consider the virulence of polemics on both sides in the time of the Reformation, when each tried to do his best in the abuse of the opposing party. And that Luther did not stand back in this respect, we can see even in his *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen*, though he went far beyond this in other works. The epithets "asses, donkeys," in this leaflet yet belong to the lighter caliber.